

## THE COTEMPORARIES OF CHRIST.

B. C. MOOMAW.

Turn a powerful search light upon a group of men in the dark and within the limited circle of that radiance everything stands revealed from afar. Every act, every movement, every face, every feature comes clearly into view, and obtains a momentary celebrity in the sight of on-lookers who themselves may be standing in the unilluminated darkness.

This illustration may give us an idea of the effect which Christ's personality had upon those of his cotemporaries who came directly in contact with him, or had any part in the history of his times. The divine light of his infinite perfections falls upon them in a dazzling, all revealing radiance, bringing into clear view every feature of character whether good or bad, and photographing it for the gaze of subsequent ages. Fame or infamy, honor or dishonor attends upon every man or woman whose name is mentioned in connection with the Christ, whose personality came under the search light of divine personality, and the lapse of ages only serves to make the revelation more vivid.

There is a curious but profitable interest in the inquiry what place would the cotemporaries of Christ now have in history had he never come into the world. Peter would have doubtless remained as Christ found him, a rather rude and profane fisherman, who would have been utterly forgotten within twelve months after his death. Paul would in all probability have been a learned and able member of the Sanhedrim, spending his time and talents in a grave discussion concerning the tithing of mint anise and cumin. It is safe to say that his fame among his own people might have lived two or three generations after his death, but the outside world would never have heard of him at all.

Herod the monster and Pilate the truculent coward would have escaped universal infamy, and their memories would have rotted as soon as their iniquities and cruelties could have been forgotten by a disgusted world.

Nicodemus would not have stood before the world in all these ages as the type of the man who would like to be good if it was only popular, or to confess Christ, if doing so involved no cross.

See how that search light brings out the covetousness of the young ruler, and in a more horrible picture that of Judas.

But it is more pleasing as well as more profitable to gaze upon the better side of character revealed by the glory of the Lord in those about him. What a beautiful portrait he gives us of that grand old Hebrew patriarch, Simeon the good.

The wonderful babe in the old man's arms lights up his face and form, so that all generations see him standing there in the magnificent temple, his snow white beard to the waste, his snow white robes touching the marble floor, and his eyes lifted to heaven as he utters those memorable words of triumphant faith and joyful desire, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Nathanael comes within the search light, and we behold the pure, noble and serious young man, of whom Christ himself could say, "in whom there is no guile." John the beloved disciple stands there also as a type of what consecrated youth may be and do.

Look at that delightful picture of the Bethany home circle, Lazarus and his two sisters with Jesus for a guest. There is Martha bustling about her household affairs, while Mary listens to the wonderful words of him who spake as never man spake. Lazarus the scribe sits at his desk in the corner yonder busily making a copy of the law, or the Psalms, or the prophets, but he must needs often stop and listen, for the words of his beloved guest are sweeter, and grander, and more wonderful than the words of Moses, or David, or Isaiah.

Little did they all dream that they were posing for a picture which would never fade out. When the marvelous creations of Michael Angelo, and Raphael, and Reubens, and Dore, and Messinger have utterly faded out and shall be forgotten, there will yet be a light more vivid than ever shining upon the portraits of Herod and Pilate, and Judas, immortalizing their infamy; and upon the portraits of Joseph the carpenter, Simeon the prophet, Peter the fisherman, Lazarus the scribe, Martha and Mary, and others who were photographed for an immortality of honor in the light of that wonderful personality with them whom they came in direct contact.

May we not get a lesson from all this? A lesson which should be profitable to us in the humble sphere of life assigned to us in our earthly pilgrimage? If we knew that our names and characters should be painted on some wonderful canvas, and hung up in plain view of all generations, and perhaps of all worlds for all the coming ages, what purpose would we form? What course of life would we follow? And yet that is perhaps exactly what is being done with every one of us.

When people sit for a picture they usually pose in an attitude or with an expression of countenance in which they wish to appear to their friends, or to posterity.

The pose is not always a perfectly natural and true representation of the man. Early in the days of photography a New England Statesman sat for two pictures. "I wish to appear," said he, "in the act of making a great speech." So the photographer took him full length, his right foot slightly advanced, his arm stretched forth in impressive gesture, his face settled in an expression of sublime tragedy and lofty feeling.

"Now I wish to appear in the bosom of my family," said the statesman. This time he was photographed sitting in an arm chair with the open Bible on his knees.

We would not be likely to say that these two pictures were faithful and true representations of the statesman at all times. He was posing as he would like to appear and as he would like to be remembered. Doubtless there were other pictures of the real man, pictures in his memory which he would not like to appear on canvas.

But the portraits which the Christ light is photographing of all men will be true to life and character, for we all come in direct contact with him, and as we are we will appear one day to men and angels. We will not be able to pose as we would like to appear.

The thought is a terrible one. There is not a man, or at any rate the fewest possible number of men, who would for a moment consent to have their inner and hidden life suddenly and fully revealed to those around them. But that is exactly what will be done when by and by we stand at the judgment seat of Christ, and he shall turn upon us the penetrating all revealing search light of his countenance. Then it is that each one will stand in close, personal and vital contact with him, and the ages will know the result.

The photographing process is going on every moment, for we are standing in the blaze of the Christ light now. Every moment of our lives we are in contact with him for eternal honor or eternal dishonor; honor for our obedience, and dishonor for our rebellion. The judgment will be the revealing time.

Would we like to appear in our own natural semblance then, or, when the canvas is suddenly turned to the gaze of the assembled universe, would we like to have appear on it the lineaments of Christ himself, shining in us and through us? That question we may decide now. If Christ is now in us, the hope of glory, Christ will then appear in us, the fruition, the outflashing, the sublime and far reaching blaze of glory, and we shall be of those who shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of the Father.